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OFFICE OF  
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

## MEMORANDUM

*Some Repercussions of the Raid on Guinea*

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31 December 1970

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

31 December 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Some Repercussions of the Raid on Guinea\*

NOTE

The Portuguese raid on Conakry in November has become a cause célèbre in much of black Africa and the Western world. Seldom has a clandestine operation in West Africa received as much publicity or had its origins so thoroughly exposed. This memorandum examines several of the consequences for Portugal, the West in general, and those African countries involved in trying to alter the status quo in southern Africa.

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\* This memorandum was prepared by the Office of National Estimates. It was discussed with representatives of the Office of Current Intelligence and the Clandestine Service, who are in general agreement with its judgments.

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1. The Portuguese accomplished much that they had intended in raiding Conakry. True, the raiding party -- composed of a few white Portuguese officers, about 200 black Portuguese soldiers, and some 100 dissident Guinean refugees -- failed to accomplish all its objectives. It did not overthrow Sekou Touré's regime or kill Amilcar Cabral, head of the African Party for the Independence of Portuguese Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC). But Touré's removal seems to have been only a secondary goal of the Portuguese planners. The UN resolution condemning Lisbon for the incident created an awkward situation for Portuguese diplomats, but there were compensations for the Portuguese government. The invaders rescued all 25 Portuguese prisoners held in Guinea, including a celebrated war hero who had been in prison for seven years. They also destroyed a number of the PAIGC boats and shore facilities in Conakry.

2. In a sense, too, the Portuguese were broadcasting a warning to other African nations that harbor "freedom fighters." Several times in the past few years, Lisbon has permitted its forces to destroy village sanctuaries across the borders in Congo (Kinshasa) and Senegal. The regimes in Kinshasa and Dakar reacted to these incursions by exercising

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greater control over the movements operating from their territory, and will probably continue to do so. The Portuguese hope that Zambia, Tanzania, and Guinea will follow these examples, and Zambia's Kaunda may take the hint. Though he is deeply committed to the cause of liberation, he seems unwilling to provoke Portuguese reprisals in Zambia, at least over the near term.

3. The Portuguese are anything but contrite. The UN censure and the rhetoric of African nationals has had no noticeable effect on Portuguese determination or policies. The military complain that African states interfere in Portuguese affairs by sanctioning the presence of rebel camps on their territory, and believe they have the right to destroy these sanctuaries. Portuguese Prime Minister Caetano may feel that he has no choice but to go along with diplomatically risky ventures of this sort in order to reassure the "ultras" about his determination to hold on to the territories. But, in any case, the PAIGC has had considerable success in Portuguese Guinea, and there was probably general agreement about the usefulness of the Conakry operation. Though Portugal has less reason to be concerned about the feckless liberation movements in its other African lands, it may be

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ready to launch some kind of operation in Zambia or Tanzania nonetheless. Kaunda appears convinced he's next on the list.

4. A display of military force seems to be pretty effective in this part of the world. West Africa is one of those areas where showing the flag, conducting naval exercises, or sending naval vessels on port calls can still have a significant impact. In 1969, the Soviets obtained the release of trawlers detained in Ghana soon after dispatching a few warships to the area. A month after the invasion of Guinea, probably at Touré's request, the Soviets sent two destroyers to Conakry as a token of support for the Guinean regime. Moreover, the presence of several thousand French troops in West Africa may have helped deter some African leaders from doing things which might irritate the French. The Portuguese probably believe that they are not doing anything very much different.

5. But many Africans blame the West in general for the Portuguese raids. The facts underlying any particular incident are often ignored in the flood of anti-imperialist rhetoric that follows. Portugal's membership in NATO is used to implicate the US and others. The occasional capture

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of Portuguese arms manufactured in the US and other NATO countries reinforces the conspiratorial theory. Most Africans are convinced that the US supplies Portugal with the equipment used to combat the guerrillas, and denials by US officials seldom persuade them otherwise.

6. Thus, in the aftermath of the raid on Guinea, the general secretary of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), long known for his anti-Western bias, was quick to denounce all the Western powers for complicity. The OAU then passed a resolution to that effect. Radio Conakry broadcast repetitive appeals for vigilance against "imperialism" in all its forms. In Lagos, demonstrators displayed anti-NATO signs and threw rocks at the US Embassy; in Abidjan, hundreds of West African university students massed in front of Western embassies and denounced NATO; even in Liberia, the public tended to criticize the West for not leaping to Guinea's defense.

7. Sekou Touré's revolutionary image has been, at least temporarily, refurbished. The raid finally justified his many years of crying wolf over alleged coup plots and threatened invasions by "imperialists." Just a few months ago, Touré was on the verge of becoming a laughing stock to black Africans by

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denying that an epidemic of cholera had broken out in Guinea. His influence was at rock bottom. Though some Africans are skeptical about his account of the invasion, he is once again regarded by many Africans as a beleaguered radical leader fighting colonialism. On the other hand, he seems already to be squandering this good will by rash charges and actions, and he seems likely to continue to do so.

8. Meanwhile, Touré has gained something at home because of the enthusiasm with which his countrymen rallied to the defense of the nation. The nationalism of Guineans clearly had not been dissipated by the lack of consumer goods and the general drabness of life. Indeed, the army and militia turned out to form a surprisingly aggressive defense force. Moreover, many civilians rushed to back the militia. Because he has been the beneficiary of this nationalistic feeling, Touré's domestic position looks stronger than it has for some time.

9. At the same time, the surge of emotion over the invasion of Guinea has strengthened the hand of those African regimes opposed to any steps toward reconciliation with the white redoubts. The proposal of the Ivory Coast's President,

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Houphouet-Boigny, for dialogue with southern Africa never had much support outside the moderate bloc, but its prospects for acceptance look even more remote since the attack on Guinea. The emergency OAU session in Lagos featured rhetoric condemning maneuvers toward dialogue with southern Africa as colonialist-inspired irresponsibility, and promised additional aid for African liberation movements.

10. In addition, with the Guinea episode in mind, the reaction of African Commonwealth members to the impending British arms sales to South Africa will probably be shriller. The British have been busy pointing out to various black African spokesmen that the equipment would be designed for coastal defenses as a counterweight to the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean rather than to protect against incursions from the north. This argument looks weaker following the attack by sea on Conakry. Moreover, the UK's membership in NATO and traditionally close ties with Portugal add to African distrust of British motives.

11. The raid thus has reinforced existing suspicions in black Africa about Western intentions in the area. By contrast, the Soviets, Chinese Communists, and most of the radical Arab

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countries were quick to take advantage of Guinean fears. Just after the invasion, when the UN was sending an investigating team to Conakry, they supplied military and other assistance to Guinea. Now some Communist countries seem to be fanning the flames by giving Touré manufactured "evidence" of US involvement in the raid. US protestations of innocence, interest, and sympathy leave many Guineans and other black Africans skeptical.

12. Over the longer run, the Portuguese raid will probably amount to just one of many incidents contributing to the deterioration of the Western position in black Africa. The Africans are already frustrated by their inability to affect the white redoubts. There isn't much they can do to get back at the West for this sense of helplessness, but we can expect many Africans to try. Under these circumstances, those Westerners who have to deal with Africans -- diplomatically, financially, or even as tourists -- will probably find many black African countries, particularly those more directly involved with liberation movements, increasingly inhospitable.

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